# Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent 2023-2026

Reading’s Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent has been created in collaboration with the Culture, Heritage and Creative sectors as well as key stakeholders. We recognise that Culture and Heritage has always been a conduit for delivering positive social benefit but that it has become even more important since covid19. This Statement of Intent recognises the importance of Culture, Creativity and Heritage in the following areas of work.

* Placemaking
* Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing
* Celebrating the diversity of Reading’s communities
* Economic Development
* Sustainability

Culture, Creativity and Heritage both drives and contributes to the above areas through innovative partnerships and co-produced projects but also recognises the importance of creating cultural events, activities and experiences where the main driver is not social benefit, but enjoyment, shared experiences, experimentation and celebration of practice.

The shape of the Statement is derived from the Culture and Heritage Strategy’s 3 Strategic Priorities; these have formed the main headlines of the document.

The objectives have been developed from the Place Branding project completed in partnership by REDA, University of Reading and Reading Borough Council in consultation with key stakeholders and 1600 members of the community. The outcome of the work can be seen [here.](https://www.visit-reading.com/readingbrand)

The place branding project recognises the importance of culture in creating a sense of place, as such it is placed front and centre in the [toolkit](https://visit-reading.nmdemo.net/dbimgs/The%20Reading%20Story.pdf) under the theme ‘Cultivating Tomorrow’s Culture’.

This is a living document and will be updated on a yearly basis to ensure that it remains relevant to the partners who work together to deliver each intent. It should be noted that the proposals in this statement of intent do not commit the Council or its partners to funding, provision or delivery. The recommended intentions will be used as a guide, to set a direction of travel and provide shared aims for the sector to coalesce around. Any actions that require funding will be dependent on budget being secured via external funding partners and approved as part of the annual budget-setting process.

## What we mean when we say Culture, Heritage and Creativity:

We use ‘culture’ in this Culture and Heritage Statement of Intent as an umbrella term*. It includes the creative industries, arts and cultural organisations, and sectors from visual and digital art, to theatre, film, music, dance, literature and fashion.*

*Cultural organisations play a key role in defining the character and identity of the places we live, work and visit. They bring us together, help us to enjoy our cities and flourish personally. They also foster creativity and innovation, provide jobs and celebrate heritage. [[1]](#footnote-1)*

We use ‘creativity’ to describe ‘*the process by which, either individually or with others, we make something new: a work of art, or a reimagining of an existing work.’[[2]](#footnote-2)*

We use ‘heritage’ to describe ‘*all that has been passed to us by previous generations. It is all around us. It is in the houses we live in, our places of work, the transport we use, our places of worship, our parks and gardens, the places we go to for our sport and social life, in the ground beneath our feet, in the shape of our landscape and in the placing and arrangement of our fields, villages, towns and cities.*

*Heritage is also found in our moveable possessions, from our national treasures in our museums, to our own family heirlooms, and in the intangible such as our history, traditions, legends and language.*

*Whilst everything we inherit is strictly our heritage, the term has become synonymous with the places, objects, knowledge and skills we inherit that are valued for reasons beyond their mere utility. In other words, they have a value to us that is over and above their functional use.’[[3]](#footnote-3)*

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| **Strategic Priority One: Enhance Identity – Being Reading/Made in Reading** |
| Objective | Intent | Partners | Cross reference with other strategic plans | RBC Corporate Plan | Arts Council Let’s Create Strategy |
| Thriving Communities | Healthy environment | Inclusive Economy | Creative People | Cultural Community | Cultural Country |
| **Community of Communities** A place powered by its people, built of vast, diverse communities, rich with culture and stories. | **Year 1**  |  |  |  |
| * Increase participation and engagement in culture and heritage by celebrating Reading’s diverse arts, culture and heritage.
* Recognise the demand for cultural hubs and cultural spaces and advocate for Cultural Organisation occupation of empty or new spaces as opportunities arise.
* Develop the HexBox in partnership with the cultural sector.
 |  | Reading 2050 VisionTackling Inequalities Strategy  | Group of men with solid fill |  |  | Badge Tick with solid fill | Badge Tick with solid fill |  |
| **Year 2** |  |  |  |
| * Support the development of capacity within our diverse cultural sector through Shared Prosperity Funding.
* Consult on the creation of a sector wide EDI intention inspired by the [Arts Council Creative Case for Diversity](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/equality-action-plan-guidance).
* Develop advocacy work and endeavor to place arts, culture and heritage within key strategic discussions and strategies, including but limited to; devolution, health and wellbeing, employment skills, education, sustainability and other key placemaking strategic developments.
 |  | Social Inclusion Reading 2050 Vision |  | Open hand with plant with solid fill |  | Badge Tick with solid fill |  | Badge Tick with solid fill |
| **Year 3**  |  |  |  |
| * Create an action plan based on HSHAZ legacy, learnings and evaluation to be incorporated into existing practices and shared strategies.
* Consult on barriers within Reading to the Creative and Cultural Life (e.g. music venues struggle because of proximity to London) to help inform future project developments.
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| **Strategic Priority Two: Increase Opportunities Through Working Together** |  |  |  |
| Objective | Intent | Partners | Cross reference with other strategic plans | RBC Corporate Plan | Arts Council Let’s Create Strategy |
| Thriving Communities | Healthy environment | Inclusive Economy | Creative People | Cultural Community | Cultural Country |
| **Forward Focused**A place always looking ahead, positively seeking to build a better future for all that call it home. | **Year 1** |  |  |  |
| * Work with creative sector and regional partners to identify local skills gaps linked with the development of the screen industries in Berkshire.
* Create opportunities to share best practice and learning locally and nationally – 1 workshop
* Develop an external funding bid to create an ongoing programme of co-commissioning of cultural projects to deliver social impact. Partner with funders and strategic delivery partners from non-ACH sectors to deliver on multiple priorities. Move beyond current partners into new communities and groups.
* Embed genuine youth voice into organisations and projects.
* Deliver the Children and Young People’s Mental Wellbeing Through Culture Project. As part of the legacy of the project, document the existing offerings in this area of the sector.
 |   | Brighter Futures for Children Cultural Education Partnership Strategy | Group of men with solid fill |  | Cheers with solid fill |  | Badge Tick with solid fill | Badge Tick with solid fill |
| **Year 2** |  |  |  |
| * Support creative skills development in our town from pipeline in schools through to apprenticeships and work in partnership to create schemes bridging skills gaps in the Creative Sector.
* Share best practice and learning locally and nationally – 2 workshops.
* Complete delivery of the CEP 2020-2023 Action Plan and consult on the next 3 year action plan.
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|  **Year 3** |  |  |  |
| * Develop an external funding bid commission further research on the value of the sector in the town – for example an economic impact or a social return on investment study –to broaden potential interest and the range of funders for ACH. Ideally working with the Whitley Researchers to develop this research.
* Commence delivery of the CEP 2024-2027 Action Plan.
 |  | CEP  |  |  | Cheers with solid fill | Badge Tick with solid fill |  |  |
| **Custodians:** A place proud to look after its people, its heritage and its landscape. Carefully protecting today, so we all have a tomorrow. | **Year 1** |  |  |  |
| * Complete a sustainability audit of local Reading Festivals funded through the Shared Prosperity Funding to support RCAN’s target of zero waste and circular festivals ([please see R13 of RCAN strategy for more detail](https://readingcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/our-plan-READING-CLIMATE-EMERGENCY-STRATEGY-2020-25-Final.pdf)).
* Work in partnership with key partners to bring Luke Jerram’s Gaia to the Town Hall for the Reading Climate Festival, to help inspire Climate Action and demonstrate the power of Culture to support positive change.
* Deliver Climate Anxiety training to embed learnings and understanding into our cultural programming.
* Develop an action plan to meet the expectations of Let's Create in relation to climate action and sustainability.
 |  | Reading Climate Change Partnership Strategy (R13) |  | Open hand with plant with solid fill |  |  |  |  |
| Year 2 |  |  |  |
| * Create a statement of intent in partnership from sustainability audit.
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| Year 3 |  |  |  |
| * *Sustainability is a fast paced, fast moving topic. With new learnings and best practice making it a constant changing landscape. Bearing this in mind year 2 and 3’s intentions will be set in partnership in line with relevant learnings and new research.*
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| **Strategic Priority Three: Celebrate Reading**  |  |  |  |
| Objective | Intent | Partners | Cross reference with other strategic plans | RBC Corporate Plan | Arts Council Let’s Create Strategy |
| Thriving Communities | Healthy environment | Inclusive Economy | Creative People | Cultural Community | Cultural Country |
| **Connected** A place connected in every sense of the word – physically, emotionally, culturally. Rooted in its heritage, its history, its people | **Year 1** |  |  |  |
| * Connect people with each other and Reading through anniversaries and local history to help create a sense of identity and celebrate what makes Reading Reading. Create a shared story of Reading’s cultural, heritage and creative landscape and the organisations and individuals that contribute to its vibrancy, but also that celebrates the power of culture to deliver social impact outcomes. Share data that enhances and evidences this power and story.
* Develop and action the Abbey Quarter Business Plan.
* Create a Strategic Cultural Network that manages the statement of intent, supports delivery of the statement and compliments the Arts and Heritage Forum by providing a platform for organisations that are planning three to four years into the future.
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| **Year 2** |  |  |  |
| * Develop What’s On Reading in line with feedback from the community, to improve joint marketing opportunities, transparency within the sector and further develop online resources including guidance on EMP/RAMS creation.
* Complete audit of current networks and forums to ensure that they meet the needs of the creative sector.
* Create mentoring opportunities and support networks for new and emerging organisations.
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| **Year 3** |
| * Develop an external funding bid to improve signage of culture and heritage assets to raise awareness. Including wayfinding.
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1. [improving\_places\_-\_culture\_and\_business\_improvement\_districts.pdf (london.gov.uk)](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/improving_places_-_culture_and_business_improvement_districts.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Our vision | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/strategy-2020-2030/our-vision) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Introduction to the Heritage Protection Guide: Heritage Conservation Defined | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/generalintro/heritage-conservation-defined/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)